

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

What Are The Dietary Guidelines For Americans?



What makes up a healthful diet? How can people make food choices that promote good health? Many people are aware that diet may be important in lowering the risk of chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, tooth decay, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some forms of cancer. Newspapers, magazines, books, radio, television, health professionals, and our friends tell us what to eat. But sorting through this information can be confusing. The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* can reduce the confusion and help us to make healthy food choices.

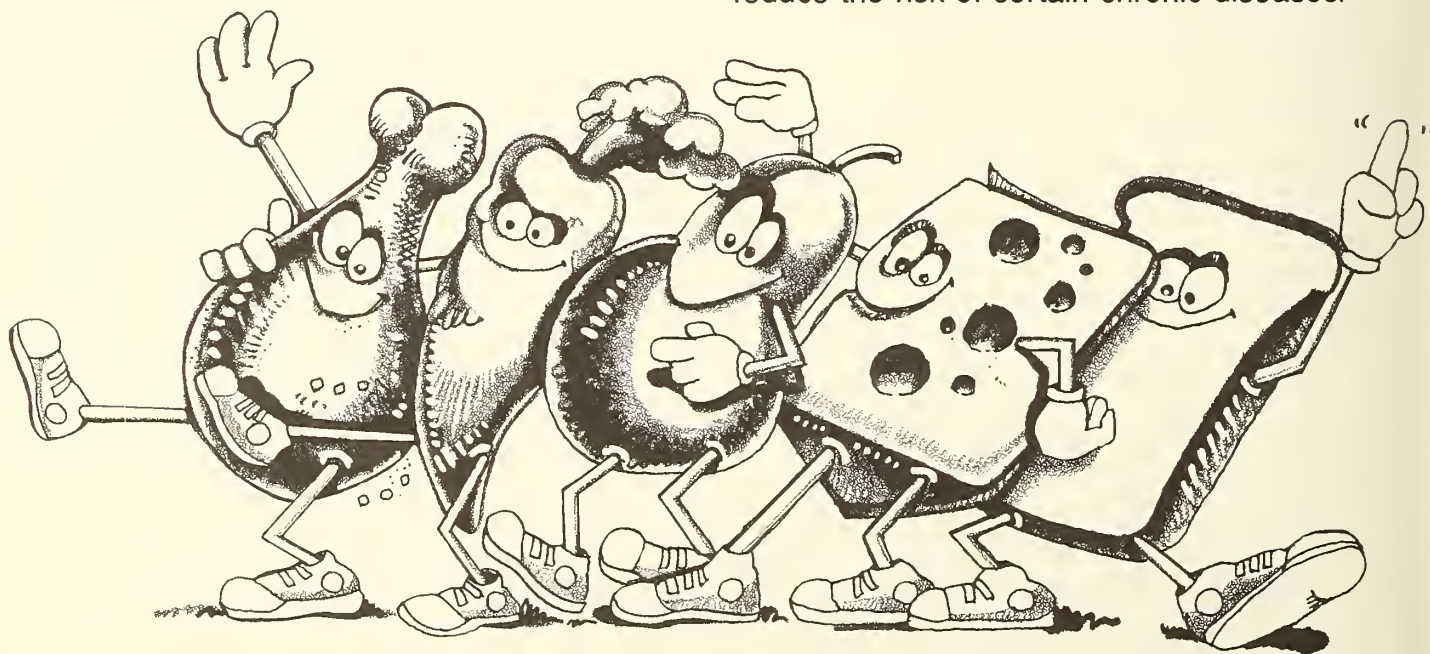
The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* are seven basic principles for a healthful diet. The Guidelines represent the best thinking in the field of nutrition and health and are the basis for all Federal nutrition information and education programs for healthy Americans. They are published jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The *Dietary Guidelines* work together to emphasize variety, balance, and moderation in the overall diet. The seven Guidelines are:

- ◆ Eat a variety of foods
- ◆ Maintain desirable weight
- ◆ Avoid too much fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol
- ◆ Eat foods with adequate starch and fiber
- ◆ Avoid too much sugar
- ◆ Avoid too much sodium
- ◆ If you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation (For teens and pregnant women: "Avoid alcoholic beverages.")

The *Dietary Guidelines* don't suggest eliminating any food. Instead, they encourage wise choices from the vast and diverse supply of foods enjoyed by Americans. They encourage eating an assortment of foods that will provide the nutrients we need without contributing too much fat, sugars, and sodium to the total diet.

Food alone won't guarantee good health. But following the *Dietary Guidelines* helps people get the nutrients they need and may reduce the risk of certain chronic diseases.



VARIETY, BALANCE, & Moderation— Keys to a Healthful Diet

A healthful diet provides variety and is moderate in fat, sugars, and sodium. But it doesn't mean no-fat, no-sugar, no-sodium, no-fun meals! If you sometimes eat foods that are higher in fat, sugars, or sodium, balance them during the day with other foods that are lower. It's your *total* diet that counts. Here are just a few of many tips for helping you choose foods for a healthful diet.

For variety, include foods from all of these groups daily:

- Breads, cereals, and other grain products, including whole-grain types such as whole-wheat bread, brown rice, and oatmeal
- Fruits, including citrus, melon, berries, and types with edible skins
- Vegetables, including dark-green leafy, deep-yellow, and starchy types such as potatoes, corn, and dry beans and peas
- Meat, poultry, fish, and alternates (eggs, dry beans and peas, nuts, and seeds)
- Milk, cheese, and yogurt

Maintain desirable weight:

- Choose a variety of foods that provide needed nutrients at a calorie intake right for you.
- Go easy on foods that supply mainly calories—sugars, sweets, fats and oils, and foods high in sugars and fats.

Avoid too much fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol:

- Choose lean meat, fish, poultry, and dry beans and peas as protein sources.
- Use skim or lowfat milk and lowfat cheese and yogurt.
- Use egg yolks and organ meats in moderation.

- Use fats and oils in moderation, especially those high in saturated fat, such as cream, lard, and butter.
- Use only moderate amounts of foods high in fat, such as deep-fat-fried foods.
- Trim fat from meats; remove skin from poultry.
- Broil, bake, steam, microwave, or boil rather than fry.
- Go easy on rich sauces and gravies.

Eat more starch and fiber:

- Choose foods that are good sources of starch—breads, cereals, pasta, rice, dry beans and peas, and vegetables such as potatoes, corn, and lima beans.
- Choose foods that are good sources of fiber, such as whole-grain breads, cereals, and pasta; vegetables and fruits; dry beans and peas.

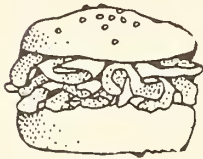
Avoid too much sugar:

- Use less of all sugars—table sugar, brown sugar, corn sweeteners, syrups, honey, and molasses.
- Eat less of foods high in sugars, such as prepared baked goods, candies, sweet desserts, soft drinks, and fruit-flavored punches and ades.
- Eat fresh fruits, unsweetened frozen fruits, or canned fruits packed in water, juice, or light syrup.
- Cut back on the amount of sugars used in recipes.

Avoid too much sodium:

- Cook without salt or with only small amounts of added salt. This includes seasoned salts (such as garlic or onion salt), as well as table salt.
- Flavor foods with herbs, spices, vinegar, or lemon juice.
- Limit use of high-sodium condiments (soy sauce, steak sauce, catsup), pickles and relishes, and salty snacks.
- Use only moderate amounts of cured or processed meats, most canned vegetables and soups.
- Try “no-salt-added” or “reduced-sodium” products. They are lower in sodium than regular versions of the same products.

VARIETY Quiz



How does your diet rate for variety? Check the box that best describes your eating habits.

How often do you eat:

Seldom or never	1 or 2 times a week	3 to 4 times a week	Almost daily
-----------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-----------------

1. At least six servings of bread, cereals, rice, crackers, pasta, or other foods made from grains per day? (A serving is one slice of bread or a half a cup of cereal, rice, etc.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

2. Foods made from whole grains?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

3. Three different kinds of vegetables per day?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

4. Cooked dry beans or peas?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

5. A dark-green vegetable such as spinach or broccoli?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

6. Two kinds of fruit or fruit juice per day?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

7. Two servings of lowfat milk, cheese, or yogurt per day? (Three for teens and for pregnant or breastfeeding women; four for pregnant or breastfeeding teens)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

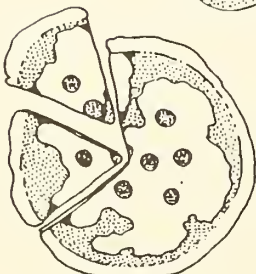
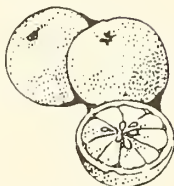
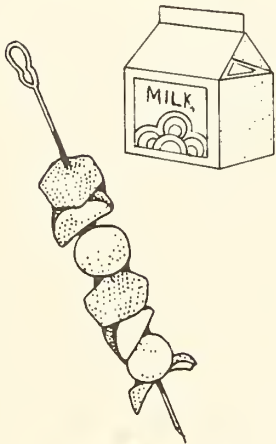
8. Two servings of lean meat, poultry, fish, or alternates such as eggs, dry beans, or nuts per day?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------

Best Answers

- 1. ALMOST DAILY.** Many people believe that eating breads and cereals will make you fat. That's not true for most of us. Extra calories often come from the fat and/or sugar you MAY eat with them. Both whole-grain and enriched breads and cereals provide starch and essential nutrients.
- 2. ALMOST DAILY.** Whole-grain breads and cereals contain vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber that are low in the diets of many Americans. Select whole-grain cereals and bakery products—those with a whole grain listed first on the ingredient label. Or make your own and use whole-wheat flour.
- 3. ALMOST DAILY.** Vegetables vary in the amounts of vitamins and minerals they contain. So, it's important to include several kinds every day.
- 4. 3 TO 4 TIMES A WEEK.** Dry beans and peas fit into two food groups because of the nutrients they provide. They can be used as an alternate to meat, poultry, and fish. And, they are also an excellent vegetable choice.
- 5. 3 TO 4 TIMES A WEEK.** Popeye gulped down spinach to build his superior strength. Although this effect of spinach was exaggerated, dark-green vegetables like spinach, kale, and broccoli are excellent sources of some nutrients that are low in many diets.
- 6. ALMOST DAILY.** Fruits are nature's sweets. They taste good and are good for you. Choose several different kinds each day.
- 7. ALMOST DAILY.** Adults as well as children need the calcium and other nutrients found in milk, cheese, and yogurt.
- 8. ALMOST DAILY.** Most Americans include some meat, poultry, or fish in their diets regularly. Dry beans and peas, peanuts (including peanut butter), nuts and seeds, and eggs can be used as alternates.

Adapted from "Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet," HG-232-1. See ordering instructions on lower right panel.



More Good Nutrition Information From USDA . . .

- **For Home Economics Teachers:**

Dietary Guidelines Teaching Kit—Designed specifically for use in junior and senior high school home economics classes! Includes a copy of *Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, HG-232; *Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet*, HG-232-1 through 7; and *Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet: Home Economics Teacher's Guide*, MP-1457. Features nine lessons and includes reproducible masters, self-assessment quizzes, and many creative hands-on learning activities. For a FREE copy write to: TEACHING KIT, P.O. Box 90723, Washington, DC 20090-0723. Please submit request on school letterhead.

- ***Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans***, HG-232. Describes basic principles for a healthful diet—the seven Dietary Guidelines developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (Single copies available for 50 cents from the Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.)
- ***Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet***, HG-232-1 through 7. Each bulletin focuses on one of the Dietary Guidelines, with practical tips on how to implement each Guideline. (Available for \$4.50 per set from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Specify stock no. 001-000-04467-2.)*
- ***Preparing Foods and Planning Menus Using the Dietary Guidelines***, HG-232-8. Tips for cooking with less fat, sugars, and sodium. Presents the “hows” and “whys” of planning healthful menus within time constraints and family tastes. Includes checklists and menu makeovers, with 10 new recipe ideas. (Available for \$2.50 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Specify stock no. 001-000-04527-0.)*



- ***Making Bag Lunches, Snacks, and Desserts Using the Dietary Guidelines***, HG-232-9. Ideas for creative bag lunches—hot and cold. Features a “Muncher's Guide” and lots of tips for desserts with less fat and sugar. Includes 27 recipe ideas. (Available for \$2.50 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Specify stock no. 001-000-04528-8.)*
- ***Shopping for Food and Making Meals in Minutes Using the Dietary Guidelines***, HG-232-10. Tips on reading food labels and an aisle-by-aisle shopping guide of the supermarket. Helps tailor Guidelines-style meals to today's busy lifestyles. Includes 18 timesaving recipe ideas. (Available for \$3.00 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Specify stock no. 001-000-04529-6.)*
- ***Eating Better When Eating Out Using the Dietary Guidelines***, HG-232-11. Guidelines-style hints on eating away from home—from fast food to gourmet dining. A sample menu helps build food selection skills. Includes section on fast foods. (Available for \$1.50 from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402. Specify stock no. 001-000-04530-0.)*

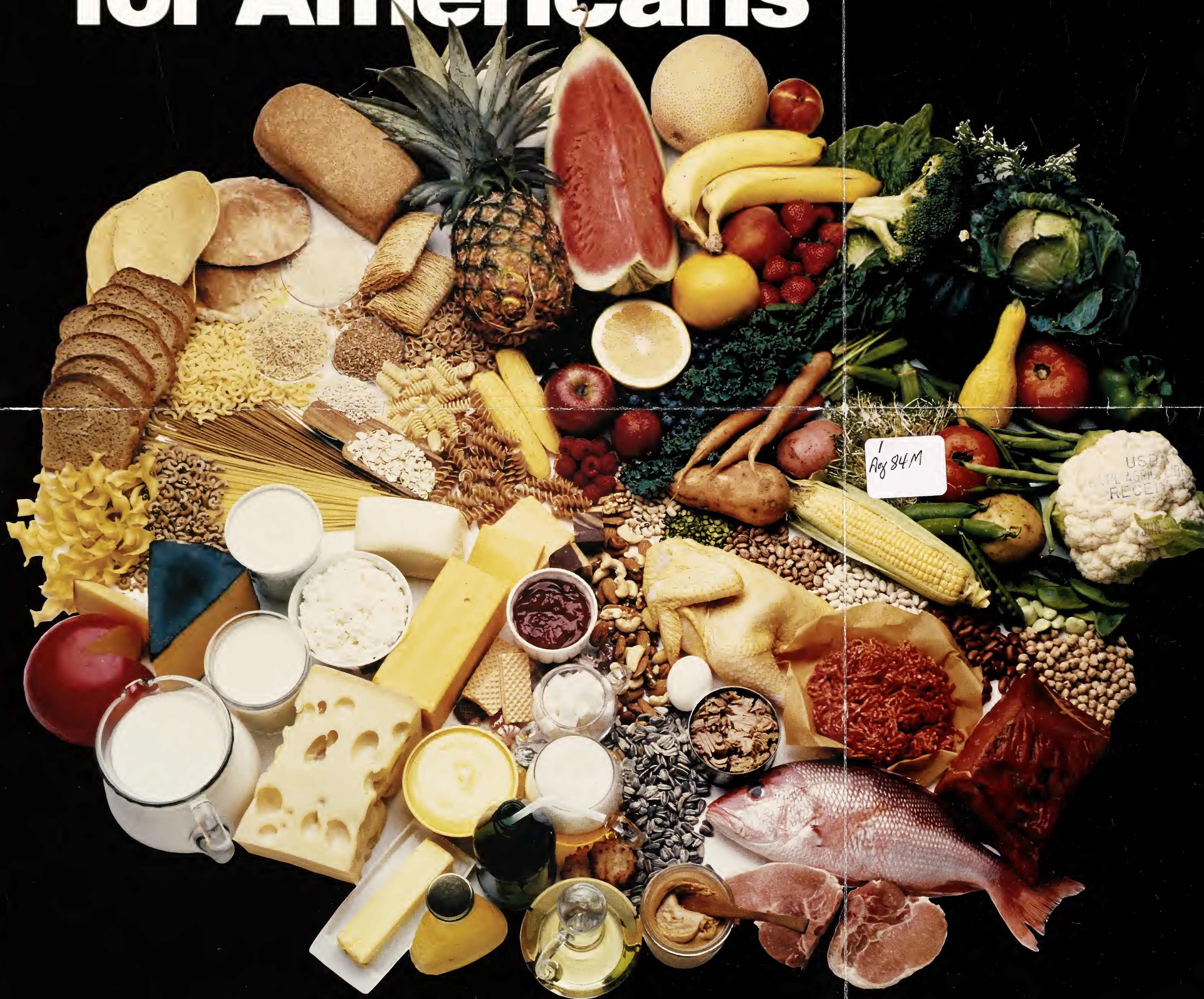
*Also may be available through your County Extension Office.



Dietary Guidelines for Americans



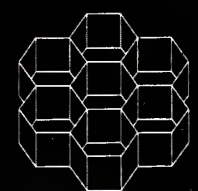
Dietary Guidelines for Americans



- ◆ **Eat a Variety of Foods**
- ◆ **Maintain Desirable Weight**
- ◆ **Avoid Too Much Fat, Saturated Fat, and Cholesterol**
- ◆ **Eat Foods with Adequate Starch and Fiber**
- ◆ **Avoid Too Much Sugar**
- ◆ **Avoid Too Much Sodium**
- ◆ **If You Drink Alcoholic Beverages, Do So in Moderation**
(For teens and pregnant women: "Avoid alcoholic beverages.")



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Human
Nutrition
Information
Service

February 1989

MP-1466

